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ABSTRACT

Responses by 247 special education directors, superintendents of schools, and principals of schools with special education teachers to a questionnaire listing 43 tasks of the perceived role of the special education director revealed greater consensus among the three groups than had been expected. Frequency distributions, analysis of variance, and factor analysis were performed. Analysis of the data suggested that the most clearly identifiable factor was one associated with the facilitator trainer dimension of the role, even though it was seen as the least important by each of the three groups of respondents. A policy planner factor also emerged from task items originally associated with other constructs (advocacy, program management, and monitoring-evaluation). Policy planning was viewed as most important by directors and principals, and second most important by superintendents. Superintendents considered the legal rights guarantor factor as the most important, while directors and principals ranked it second. Views of principals toward the role of special education directors were seen as less clear than those of the other two groups. (CL)

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ROLE EXPECTATIONS FOR THE DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

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Introduction

The achievement of organizational goals depends greatly on the ability of administrators to work together effectively. This entails agreement on roles and responsibilities. Discrepancies in role expectations can lead to role conflict and role ambiguity.

Rapidly changing and generally increasing focus on educational programs for the handicapped in recent years places the role of the administrator of such programs at the center of an arena in which expectations held by the major significant participants may be changing, inconsistent, and thereby counterproductive to organizational goals.

Purpose

The primary purpose of this research was to generate empirical data about the possibly controversial expectations held by key actors within local public school systems regarding the role of the special education director. The general question guiding the study was "What is the degree of consensus among and within groups of superintendents, principals, and directors for the role expectations of the local special education director?" More specifically, hypotheses were generated concerning differences among those relevant groups of personnel in their

expectations on five dimensions of the role, as postulated by Burrello and Sage (1979). Therefore, a secondary purpose was the verification of these five constructs as relevant dimensions of the role.

Related Research

In the literature on special education administrators, three approaches to the study of the role seem to emerge: a) the examination of functions and tasks, b) consideration of different groups' perceptions, and c) identification of problems encountered by persons in the role. The early survey by Mackie and Engel (1955), Taylor (1967), Sage (1968), Sloat (1969), Newman (1970), Kohl and Marro (1971), and Whitworth and Hatley (1979) are representative of the first type. Review of these studies gives evidence of the changing nature of tasks and functions over time and suggest the probability of varying perceptions among different groups. These differences (representative of the second type) have been cited by Courtnage (1967), Hill (1967), Parelius (1968), Mazor (1977), Mallek (1970), Whitworth and Hatley (1979). While most researchers reported high consensus within and among respondent groups, variations over time suggests that recent evolution of the role may lead to differing perceptions. Studies using the "identified problem" approach include those reported by Willenberg (1964), Wisland and Vaughn (1968), and Kothera (1968). In sum, the literature seems to confirm the comprehensiveness of the role as

perceived by a variety of observers. Few of these studies, however, approached an analysis of the role from any theoretical framework. The use of the role dimension constructs of Burrello and Sage (1979) for the present study is an attempt to identify and verify a means of further examining the special education directorship. These role dimensions have been described as follows:

Advocate: The special education directors may serve as an agent through which services are obtained. Utilizing legal processes and protections, the rights of the client are placed ahead of the interests of the school system when the director is playing this role.

Facilitator-Trainer: The special education director may be responsible for staff development, to provide orientation and technical assistance to both specialists and generalists on issues relating to special service delivery.

Policy Planner: The special education director may be concerned with the determination of systemic interrelationships affecting special education programs; the development, adoption, and implementation of policies concerning identification of needs, resources, models of organization and delivery strategies.

Monitor-Evaluator: The special education director may be responsible for investigating the degree to which others are

carrying out their responsibilities, program objectives are being achieved, and individual clients are receiving guaranteed appropriate services.

Program Manager: The special education director may be directly involved with operational supervision and administration of services. While the degree of management involvement is likely to differ with the varying delivery systems required to meet the full range of severity of student need, the demand for technical management skills is predominant.

With these five role dimensions as a guide, an instrument was developed to assess the perceived importance of a variety of tasks confronting incumbent special education directors.

Methodology

A cross-sectional survey was used for this study because it offered a systematic way of collecting data from a large population at one point in time. A self-administered mailed questionnaire was selected as the tool for data collection.

The questionnaire contained a list of 43 tasks that a director of special education may be expected to perform. The respondents were asked to rate each one on a seven point scale from "not part of role" to "essential to role". These tasks were classified according to Burrello and Sage's five constructs; each construct consisting of from seven to nine of the items.

Subjects

The subjects were three relevant administrator groups: special education directors in New York State*, the superintendents of schools in each director's district, and a random sample of principals within the same districts who were assigned to buildings having a special education teacher on duty at least 50 percent of the time. The recipients of the questionnaire (N=480) represented equal numbers of directors, superintendents, and principals.

Data Analysis

The data analysis started with the frequency distributions of responses of directors, principals, and superintendents to obtain a profile of respondents. Frequency distributions were also done on the type of district (Big Five, BOCES, other**) and on responses to each item in order to determine the basic distributional characteristics of the data.

* This group comprised virtually all (with the exception of New York City) persons meeting established criteria for local special education directors within the state.

** Organizations comprising the sample included 44 BOCES, four of the "Big Five" city systems of the state (since New York City was excluded as a unique case) and 112 other local districts employing their own directors and operating programs apart from BOCES.

An Analysis of Variance was conducted to determine whether significant differences existed between role, type of district, and role by type of district interaction.

Factor analysis was completed on two levels. First, the responses of all subjects collectively were factor analyzed to determine the number and nature of factors that emerged from the data; then additional factor analysis was completed on the responses of the three administrator groups separately.

Results

Usable responses were received from 247 subjects (51.1 percent) with directors showing the highest (58 percent) rate of response and principals the lowest (46 percent) rate. Broken down by district type, BOCES organizations yielded a response rate of 48 percent; Big Five districts only 33 percent; but other districts (constituting the predominant proportion of the total recipients) provided a 54 percent response rate.

Responses to the task items comprising each role construct were subjected to analysis of variance to determine whether significant differences existed among superintendents, principals and directors in the way they viewed the task as being "essential to the role" of the special education director. The results of this analysis suggest the following:

The Advocate Role

While it had been anticipated that directors would view the advocacy dimensions of their role as more essential than would superintendents, responses to the items compromising the advocate role revealed no significant differences among type of respondent or type of district.

The expectation that advocacy behavior might constitute a disruption to organizational status quo, and therefore a point of disagreement among these administrators, was not supported.

The Policy Planner Role

It had also been expected that directors would view the policy planner role as more essential than would superintendents, since policy planning behavior might be seen as an invasion of the chief administrator's turf. Again, results indicated no significant difference among either the type of respondent or type of district.

The Facilitator-Trainer Role

Hypotheses regarding the facilitator-trainer role had been advanced on the expectation that the special education director's activities in this domain (the sharing of responsibility for staff development) might constitute an invasion of the

principal's territorial boundaries. Further, it was anticipated that this would not be an area of disagreement between directors and superintendents.

The data analysis revealed that contrary to hypothesized differences, both superintendents and principals attributed significantly greater relevance to the facilitator-trainer dimension of the role than did directors themselves. Furthermore, a significant interaction between role and type of district occurred. That is, while BOCES directors and principals gave a lower rating to this dimension than did non-BOCES directors and principals, these differences were in the reverse direction among superintendents.

The Program Manager Role

The program manager role is also one in which differences between directors' and principals' views were anticipated, primarily on the grounds of competitive functions. The results revealed, however, that while superintendents attributed great importance to this dimension and principals considered it relatively much less essential, the directors' views were intermediate and therefore did not constitute a significant difference from either of the other administrator groups.

The Monitor-Evaluator Role

It was anticipated that the monitor-evaluator role might infringe upon the domain of both the principal and the superintendent, since the impact of laws and regulations governing the education of the handicapped children may occur at both the building and systemwide levels. Therefore, differences between respondents in the perceived importance of this dimension were hypothesized. The analysis of responses indicated that while directors considered this role as more essential than did principals, differences between directors and superintendents were non-significant.

The relative importance attributed to each role construct by each administrator group can be seen in the data displayed in Table 1. These data demonstrate that the rank order of the five constructs based on the mean responses of the directors, superintendents, and principals are identical, with one notable exception: the highest mean of superintendents was for the monitor-evaluator role, with the policy planner role ranking second. The directors' and principals' mean score for policy planner was highest, with the monitor evaluator role second. The mean score for facilitator-trainer was the lowest for all groups. A similar degree of consensus (i.e. within group variance) existed across all three groups and among the five constructs, with the exception of the facilitator-trainer role, in which there was greatest variance across the three groups.

---- Insert Table 1 Here ----

Primary Factor Analysis

The original hypotheses were based on a priori assumptions of Burrello and Sage's constructs; therefore it was deemed appropriate to test the validity of the constructs. To define the respondents' perceptions of factors that accounted for the role of the special education director and to determine whether the responses yielded the same or different configurations of role dimensions as compared to the original constructs, the 43 items of the questionnaire were factor analyzed, first taking the entire group of respondents as a whole.

Inspection of the factor loadings of the 43 items after a varimax rotation indicated that only three factors clearly emerged. These three factors utilized thirty-seven of the items and accounted for 87 percent of the total variance (see Table 2).

---- Insert Table 2 Here ----

Factor one comprised 12 items, seven of these being from the original facilitator-trainer tasks. The loadings for the twelve items, the construct with which the items were originally associated, and the wording of these task items are presented in Table 3. While the other five items had been associated with other role dimensions, the foci of these items (coordination of curriculum materials, suggestions and support to teacher, and

evaluation of both personnel and pupil progress) can be easily interpreted as clustering under the facilitator-trainer classification. Therefore, the first new factor to emerge from the analysis was given the label, FACILITATOR-TRAINER.

---- Insert Table 3 Here ----

The second factor to emerge was also labeled as one of the original constructs, POLICY PLANNER. This new factor encompassed 14 task items, half of which were drawn from the original policy planner construct. Again, inspection of the items which had originally belonged to other constructs, readily permits their logical fit with the policy planner factor (see Table 4).

---- Insert Table 4 Here ----

While the first two factors were clearly similar to the theoretical constructs, the third factor to emerge was quite different and encompassed items which had originally been identified with the monitor-evaluator, advocate, and policy planner constructs. Inspection of these items makes clear that they address the issue of guaranteeing legal rights, i.e. developing due process procedures, providing statements that guarantee the right of all handicapped children to a free and appropriate public education, and implementing legislation. Therefore, this new factor was labeled LEGAL RIGHTS GUARANTOR (see Table 5).

---- Insert Table 5 Here ----

Secondary Factor Analysis

A subsequent factor analysis was completed, taking each respondent group separately, to determine the degree to which inter-group differences might emerge. In this analysis, the same three major factors emerged, but differing in order among the three respondent groups. Analysis of the responses of the 93 directors yielded results which most nearly approximated that of the total group. The strongest factor (accounting for 40.3% of the variance) was made up of 11 items, 8 of which were among the 12 tasks identified in the original group analysis as Facilitator-Trainer items. The loading of the remaining items in this factor was relatively low, making it very clear that for directors, the tasks comprising the hypothesized Facilitator-Trainer role construct are the most distinct (though low valued) aspect of their position.

The second factor to emerge from director's responses (accounting for 23.3% of the variance) consisted of 11 items, 8 of which were among the 12 identified in the total group analysis as representing the Legal Rights Guarantor functions. Again, the loadings on the remaining items marked them as marginal contributors to the identified factor. A third factor (accounting for 17.8% of the variance) included 8 items, 7 of which were among the 14 items identified as emphasizing the Policy Planner functions. These three factors, utilizing 30 of

the 43 original task items, cumulatively accounted for 81.3 percent of the variance, with the remaining items distributed among two factors of approximately equal, low loading and not clearly associated with any role.

Superintendents' responses were similarly clear in their identification of factors constituting the role of the director of special education. The first factor to emerge from the analysis (accounting for 41.3% of the variance) consisted of 13 items, 8 of which (carrying the highest loading) were among those identified as Legal Rights Guarantor in the primary analysis. A second factor (accounting for 24.4% of the variance) consisted of 8 items, all of which were among those identified as Facilitator-Trainer in the primary analysis. The third factor (accounting for 15.5% of the variance) was comprised of 10 items, 8 of which were clearly associated with the Policy Planner functions. The three factors together utilized 31 of the forty-three original items, cumulatively accounting for 81.2% of the variance.

Principals' responses resulted in an analysis which was much more difficult to interpret and classify. While the first factor for principals accounted for a greater percentage of the variance (45.8%) than the first factor for the other two groups of respondents, the nature of that factor, in terms of the previously established role functions, appeared to be less distinct. Four of the 10 items comprising the factor were among those previously identified as belonging to the Legal Rights Guarantor function; five items were from the Policy Planner role.

Individual item loadings also were rather evenly divided between the two previously identified factors. Close inspection of the wording of the task items tended to suggest more emphasis on the public awareness, community and parent relations, and advocacy aspects of policy development and implementation.

The problem is extended when examining the second factor to emerge (accounting for 25.2% of the variance), since the eight items comprising that factor include five previously identified as Policy Planner and three belonging to the Legal Rights Guarantor. Again the weight of evidence is on the Policy Planner function, but inspection of the items suggests an emphasis on the more internal, organizational, procedural planning, development and management. The distinction between the first and second factor, if one can be drawn, may then be based on external policy versus internal procedural aspects of the guarantee of access to service programs.

The clearest result from this analysis was the identification of the third factor to emerge as the Facilitator-Trainer factor, consisting of 10 items, all of which had been previously associated with that role. This factor, however, accounted for only 11.7% of the variance, thereby limiting the weight of that association.

The results of this secondary factor analysis are summarized in Table 6.

---- Insert Table 6 Here ----

Discussion

Analysis of the data suggests that the most clearly identifiable factor is one which should be associated with the facilitator-trainer dimension of the role. While this dimension as originally constructed, is seen as the least important by each of the three groups of respondents, it is most clearly identifiable by the group as a whole. Furthermore, contrary to expectations, the directors viewed this role as significantly less important than did the other administrators. Apparently, both principals and superintendents are looking to the director for his technical specialist contribution, but the directors view it differently. Also, there was least consensus (that is, highest within group variance) found within this role dimension. This may mean that the facilitator-trainer dimension is the newest, or least familiar role of all those studied, and is especially problematic to the directors themselves. This could suggest that this function has been traditionally performed by people outside the system, such as university personnel. An alternative explanation may be that while it is familiar, it is perceived as a low status activity by directors, one which they would rather delegate to someone else. These findings also suggest that neither principals nor superintendents view a director's facilitator-trainer activity as an invasion of turf.

The emergence of a policy planner factor supports the contention of policy planning as a key ingredient of the special education director's job. The relative breadth of this factor is

evident by the fact that task items originally associated with other constructs (advocacy, program manager, and monitor-evaluator) clustered to form this new factor. This role dimension, as originally construed, was viewed as most important by directors and principals, and second most important by superintendents. Furthermore, there was a high degree of agreement across the three groups as to the importance of the dimension. This may be interpreted as a surprisingly high level of agreement among administrators about the important aspects of the special education director's role. This agreement is encouraging in view of concerns about the organizational implications of role conflict. If key administrators tend to agree on what they view is most important, the impact of disagreement on dimensions of lesser importance may be more easily managed.

The Legal Rights Guarantor factor consisted mainly of items from three hypothesized constructs: monitor-evaluator, advocate, and policy planner. This suggests a similarity between advocate, monitor-evaluator, and certain policy planner tasks which address the issue of guaranteeing legal rights. The importance of this new factor seems evident by an examination of the ranking of the original dimensions of which it is comprised. In addition to the policy planner dimension, viewed as most important by directors and principals and second by superintendents, the monitor-evaluator dimension was considered the most important by superintendents and second by directors and principals. Also,

there was a high degree of consensus among all groups on both policy planner and monitor-evaluator dimensions.

The secondary factor analyses of responses by the three individual groups provide an added perspective. The clear identity of the Facilitator-Trainer role as identified by directors, and the equally clear emergence of the Legal Rights Guarantor role as perceived by superintendents would appear to not only establish those dimensions of the role as significant aspects of the director's position, but also seems to indicate a discrimination between the perspectives of those two types of respondents. It is not that these respondents necessarily place high value on those role behaviors, but rather that they clearly associate these behaviors or functions with the director's role. It is also clear that principals do not share such a distinct perception of the role. It may be that the more ambiguous results of the factor analysis for principals reflect a less clear perception of what special education directors do, or should do, in the exercise of their role. In the principal's perception, it may be that the functions which have been identified as Legal Rights Guarantor and Policy Planner are both very pronounced, and if they can be separated, it would be on the basis of external policy versus internal procedural aspects of the Legal Rights Guarantor role.

The groups as a whole placed high value and reasonable clarity on the Policy Planner functions, but when each group was analyzed separately, the distinctiveness of other roles

apparently overshadowed or fragmented the Policy Planner function.

Conclusions

The major finding of this study is the appearance of more commonality of expectations for the special education director among the three groups of personnel studied than had been anticipated. Both the ranking of importance of the *a priori* constructs of role dimensions, and the clarity of factors emerging from analysis of the three groups' responses to the instrument suggest no great discrepancies in role expectation.

The distinctiveness of the Facilitator-Trainer role in the perceptions of all groups, especially the directors themselves, irrespective of the lower value placed on it by the directors, reinforces previous observations regarding the technical specialist view of special education administrators. The emergence of the Policy Planner role as the most valued one by the respondents as a whole suggests a shift, or maturation of the role from the technical, instructionally related one, to a more broadly, conceptually based, policy role. It is probable that the driving force for this shift can be attributed to the legal, regulatory posture which demands of school systems an administrator whose technical knowledge can be directed to the planning and policy requirements of current educational service systems.

The distinctiveness of factors generated from the directors' and superintendents' responses suggests that the directors themselves, and superintendents have an equally clear, but dissimilar perspective of the special education director's role. The directors focused on the Facilitator-Trainer aspects of the role, while the Legal Rights Guarantor tasks were most identifiable by superintendents.

If we consider the factors as viewed by the superintendents and directors as the relevant ones, then the somewhat different views held by the principals must be interpreted as less clear. At least the principals' view of the directors' Policy Planning and/or Legal Rights Guarantor functions seem to be based on a differentiation between internal and external dimensions that are not as pronounced from the perspective of the others.

If one assumes a greater vulnerability to role interference between the functions of directors and those of principals than between directors and superintendents, then any discrepancy in perceptions would demand attention and search for reconciliation. Therefore, lack of clarity may be considered as an indication of need for whatever training or intervention will lead to clearer expections of the director's role on the part of principals.

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Table 1

Role Construct Means and Standard Deviations, by Groups

Role Construct	Directors		Superintendents		Principals	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Advocate	5.7204	0.757	5.8125	0.781	5.6757	0.893
Policy Plannner	6.1720	0.717	6.0750	0.776	5.9730	0.950
Facilitator-Trainer	4.6237	1.179	4.9625	1.096	5.0000	1.034
Program Manager	5.5914	0.811	5.7875	0.791	5.4054	0.859
Monitor-Evaluator	6.1505	0.751	6.1750	0.546	5.9324	0.746

Table 2

Factors Derived from Total Group Responses

Factor	Eigenvalue	Percentage of Variance	Cumulative Percentage
1	6.75275	44.5	44.5
2	4.37761	28.8	73.3
3	2.08058	13.7	87.0
4	1.05351	6.9	94.0
5	0.91570	6.0	100.0

Table 3

Factor 1: Facilitator-Trainer Loadings for Identified Task Items

Task	Loading	Construct	Wording
42	.83516	ft	Assist teachers in utilizing diagnostic techniques and planning remedial instruction.
40	.82894	ft	Assist teachers in the preparation of specialized instructional materials.
19	.66111	pm	Coordinate the selection of curriculum materials.
8	.64875	ft	Demonstrate teaching methods and uses of instructional materials.
1	.63219	pm	Observe specific children in classrooms and offer suggestions to teachers with regard to effective ways of working with the child.
3	.55067	ft	Train paraprofessional school personnel.
24	.47995	ft	Provide inservice training for special and regular personnel in order to develop programs to upgrade present instruction.
2	.45812	adv	Act as a resource, support person to regular teachers, and other school personnel.
15	.40570	ft	Develop personnel training workshops.
18	.39388	me	Evaluate special education personnel.
21	.38088	ft	Develop and conduct a needs assessment for personnel training.
41	.36053	me	Oversee pupil accounting records and evaluations of pupil progress.

Table 4

Factor 2: Policy Planner Loadings for Identified Task Items

Task	Loading	Construct	Wording
31	.61363	adv	Maintain liaison with community and state agencies.
12	.60325	pp	Develop plans for interdistrict cooperative arrangements.
11	.54550	adv	Report to the public on the nature and scope of programs for the handicapped.
30	.50925	pm	Develop plans for effective staff utilization.
28	.45586	pp	Develop policy regarding shared authority between general and special education supervisory staff.
38	.44443	pp	Form policies which influence general program development and long-range planning.
17	.41027	pp	Develop policy which provides a continuum of education services.
29	.40389	pm	Coordinate services of the district's medical, psychological, social workers, and other personnel.
43	.36258	me	Enforce state and federal standards for program operation.
5	.35199	me	Modify policies and procedures based upon changing needs.
10	.34611	pp	Establish procedures to guarantee nondiscriminatory assessment of children.
32	.34348	pp	Help the board of education determine the special educational needs of the community.
14	.32869	ft	Coordinate practicum experiences with colleges and universities.
13	.28645	pp	Plan for the administration of state and federally funded programs.

Table 5

Factor 3: Legal Rights Guarantor Loadings for Identified Task Items

Task	Loading	Construct	Wording
6	.73115	me	Coordinate due process procedures.
16	.66745	pp	Develop due process procedures for adoption by the board of education.
36	,52889	adv	Advise parents regarding their appeal rights on placement disputes.
23	.50140	me	Chair the District Committee on the Handicapped meetings.
33	.45920	pp	Provide the public with a policy statement that guarantees the right of all handicapped children to a free, appropriate public education.
22	.44264	me	Interpret laws and regulations governing the education of handicapped children.
39	.39422	adv	Develop a public awareness campaign to identify unserved or underserved children.
26	.38462	pm	Assess transportation needs of the handicapped.
35	.36432	adv	Testify to a legislative committee on program expansion.
20	.32999	pp	Develop rules and regulations to implement existing and new legislation.
7	.26855	adv	Handle complaints and other public relations problems.

Table 6

Roles of the Director of Special Education
as Perceived by Respondent Groups

Factors	Directors	Superintendents	Principals
Factor 1	FACILITATOR-TRAINER	LEGAL RIGHTS GUARANTOR	EXTERNAL POLICY ADVOCATE
eigenvalue	6.72269	6.93628	8.63280
% of variance	40.3	41.3	45.8
Factor 2	LEGAL RIGHTS GUARANTOR	FACILITATOR-TRAINER	INTERNAL PROCEDURAL PLANNER
eigenvalue	3.87653	4.09758	4.76013
% of variance	23.3	24.4	25.2
Factor 3	POLICY PLANNER	POLICY PLANNER	FACILITATOR-TRAINER
eigenvalue	2.96228	2.61005	2.21495
% of variance	17.8	15.5	11.7